



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ARLINGTON VIRGINIA

A Place to Connect, Grow and Serve

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8th Principle and UU's Racial History

Our UUCA congregation will **vote on March 31 whether to adopt the 8th Principle**. If endorsed, UUCA will be held to *"accountably dismantle racism in our selves and our institutions."* This is the last in a series on UU's racial history, which looks at how racism continue to affect people of color who claim space in the Unitarian Universalist faith.



UU's Racial History – Part 4, 2015 to today

The Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism was created at a convening of the Movement for Black Lives in July 2015, when Black UUs came together out of a need for more spiritual connection. BLUU kicked off in September 2015 with the [Seven Principles of the Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism](#), and since then has provided ministry for, and by, Black Unitarian Universalists while working to expand the role and visibility of Black UUs within our faith.

When in October 2016 the UUA Board of Trustees committed \$5.3 million to support BLUU, they issued a statement saying "our decision reflects an understanding that Unitarian Universalism has benefitted from the system of white supremacy that advantages white people and white institutions." Congregations affirmed this financial commitment at the 2017 GA in New Orleans, and since then 170 congregations have participated in fund raising to fulfill this promise. In December 2018, UUA President Susan Frederick Gray announced that the [UUA had secured \\$4 million of that target for BLUU](#).

In late 2018 BLUU's monthly newsletter stated "currently BLUU does not have plans, money, or intentions to attend GA 2019 in Spokane, WA.... Part of the reason we made this decision is that last year our request for funding assistance for Black UUs to get to GA was denied, and there appears to be no long term, substantive strategic plan for making GA more inclusive for Black UUs." BLUU later clarified that they are not boycotting this year's General Assembly, soon after announced they are hosting the [Harper-Jordan Memorial Symposium](#) in the fall of 2019, in which "we are opening ourselves up to an articulation of Unitarian Universalism that is unapologetically Black and proceeds from our co-creation and co-development, such that we might proclaim and clarify a vision for a Black Unitarian Universalism."

In June 2018, BLUU undertook the first-ever [survey of Black UUs](#) which found *"whether or not they're part of a congregation, Black UUs ... said they feel a deep sense of isolation... Respondents said they tend to become a part of UU congregations because of their theology, and many said they feel white dominant culture gets in the way of their communal experience at church."*

In the past two years, Unitarian Universalism has continued to struggle with racism within our institution. In 2017, the [Rev. Peter Morales announced his resignation](#) from the presidency of the UUA, stepping down amidst a controversy over the UUA's hiring practices, and statements he made in response to charges that the Association's policies reflect and perpetuate white supremacy. In February 2018, BLUU shared on YouTube a [conversation with BLUU 360 Council member Rev. Dr. Susan Newman Moore](#) about her employment and treatment at All Souls UU in Washington, DC, which led to her resignation.

The UUA also acknowledged that there were incidents faced by religious professionals of color in UU congregations following the White Supremacy teach-ins, which took place in UU churches across the country in 2017-18. Christina Rivera is a Latina UU elected to the UUA Board of Trustees in 2014, who was a lead organizer of the Teach-ins, as well as vocal about UUA's hiring practices. In March 2018, an anonymous racist message targeting Rivera was left at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial UU Church in Charlottesville, Virginia, where Cristina works as Director of Administration and Finance. In October 2018, during a UUA board meeting in Boston, the UUA also received anonymous hate mail targeting Rivera's son, who is a Youth Caucus volunteer leader. Cristina's letter of resignation from the UU Board in December 2018 did not mention the hate mail, however she urged the Board to fill her vacancy with a candidate who has an understanding of multiple marginalized identities and deep experience with antiracism facilitation. On December 12, 2018 DRUUMM (Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries) [called for a restorative justice process](#) to address the harassment of Rivera and her family.

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This concludes our four-part series about Unitarian Universalist's racial history. UUs are approaching a critical mass of awareness about the systemic nature of racism and other oppressions in our institution, which continue up to the present day.

The 8th Principle Task Force believes that if adopted, the 8th Principle will give UUs a shared vision of a Beloved community, and challenge us to both personal and institutional transformation. Living the 8th Principle will require we learn from our past, recognize that within systems of oppression everyone suffers, and focus on creating the world we know is possible, for our collective liberation.

References:

"UU Racial Diversity Timeline" <https://www.geo.sunysb.edu/uu-history/racial.htm>

"BLUU Story" on the Black Lives of Unitarian Universalist website:
<http://www.blacklivesuu.com/bluustory/>

"Trustees pledge \$54,000 toward Black Lives of UU, reaffirms \$5.3 million commitment to BLUU, acknowledges concerns with process." Elaine McArdle, UU World, Summer 2017.

"UUA president resigns amid controversy over hiring practices" Christopher Walton, UU World, Spring 2017.

"Christina Rivera resigns from UUA Board of Trustees" Elaine McArdle, UUA website, Dec 17, 2018

** FAQs and other resources on the 8th Principle and related issues are available on our [Eight Principle Task Force Facebook page](#).